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AN  
APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE,  
ON THE  
ALLEGED CAUSES  
OF THE  
DISSENTERS' SEPARATION  
FROM THE  
ESTABLISHED CHURCH:  
TO WHICH ARE SUBJOINED  
A FEW CAUTIONARY OBSERVATIONS,  
IN RESPECT TO THEIR  
PRESENT POLITICAL VIEWS.

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BY A CLERGYMAN, IN THE DIOCESE OF SALISBURY.

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“ The number of dissenting places of worship registered in the diocese of Salisbury, during eighteen years down to 1796 inclusive, did not, at an average, exceed annually *seven* or *eight*. But in the single year 1797, there have been opened and registered upwards of *forty*.”

Bishop of Salisbury's Charge to his Clergy, *August*, 1798.

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Salisbury:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY J. EASTON:

SOLD ALSO BY

F. AND C. RIVINGTON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, AND  
J. HATCHARD, 173, PICCADILLY, LONDON.

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1798.



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## AN APPEAL, &c.

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**F**ROM the very numerous increase of Dissenters, in every part of this kingdom, particularly within the diocese of Salisbury, in the course of the last year, it will, I should suppose, be deemed no unseasonable production, to state the principal objections, usually alleged by them, against conformity with our national church; and to produce arguments, many of which have been, at different periods, advanced by the established clergy, against the validity of those objections; with the view of stopping the progress of their conversion, and of reclaiming the deluded. In executing this purpose, I intend to confine myself to the objections of those dissenters chiefly, who agree with us, as to the



truth of the fundamental doctrines of christianity.

The dissenters are, at present, distinguished by an endless variety of denominations; whose principles are so various, so opposite, and so contradictory, that they are hardly intelligible to the best informed; and in most instances, unintelligible even to the different members of their own respective bodies. Those, who admit the divinity and consubstantiality of our blessed Saviour, and have digested any regular system of doctrines, in opposition to those of the church, have thought proper to advance the following objections against the ritual part of her worship. Though these objections have, at different periods, been repelled in a very able manner, by many learned men of the church establishment, and the stamp of frivolousness and futility impressed upon them; yet the same objections, weak and inconsiderable as they are, the interest, the ambition, or the faction of demagogues has not ceased to inculcate and maintain.

Premeditated prayers, they affirm, alienate the attention of the hearers, and quench the spirit of devotion. The truth of this assertion, so far from admitting, I feel myself obliged



obliged to deny; and will endeavour concisely to prove, on the contrary, that religious attention is alienated, and devout affections suppressed, by those, which are extemporaneous; and assisted by preconceived forms.

That these consequences naturally follow the previous positions, is evident, by considering; first, that, in extemporaneous prayer, the understandings of both minister and people must be exercised, the former, to invent matter and expression, the latter, to comprehend the import of them: and secondly, that the judgment also of the congregation must be engaged, to discover the propriety of his prayers; whether they can conscientiously join with their minister; and whether such prayers be accommodated to their peculiar circumstances. And can any thing be mentioned, which will prove more effectual to absorb attention to the professed object of prayer, and to quench inward devotion; which is its life and spirit? The senseless jargon, the frequent repetitions, as well as impropriety of expression, the suspension of voice and words, and erroneous conception of ideas, which alternately prevail in extemporaneous prayer, not only destroy devotion; but,

at the same time, disgust the mind, excite derision and pity, and scandalize religion itself.

Such just imputations and deplorable consequences attach not to preconceived prayer. Being the sober reflections of dispassionate reason, adapted to the general wants and circumstances of mankind, its excellence must be admitted over the senseless and incoherent effusions of the moment. When the substance and expression of a prayer are previously understood to be good and proper, the minister and people have no other employment, than merely to confine their attention to the devout feelings of prayer; are more capable of bringing their minds to a state of contrition and gratitude; to a due sense of their wants, and dependency upon divine Providence. So far from suppressing, or checking, forms of prayer, therefore, very much assist devotion.

But some dissenters have not scrupled to affirm, that they have often felt, upon public occasions, an internal sensation, which they have dared to call the impulse of the divine spirit. Whether they have really felt such a pretended sensation, or what the precise nature of it may have been, is not for me to decide.

But

But I positively deny, in the most unqualified terms, the fact of its being a divine impulse; and I deny it upon the following grounds. First; we cannot, without incurring the guilt of blasphemy, accuse the divine spirit of being the author, or suggester, of such senseless, insignificant expressions, and disgusting repetitions, as are often delivered by dissenting ministers. Secondly; all former inspiration was attested by miracles. We may reasonably inquire, therefore, and suspend our belief, until our inquiries be satisfied, after this attesting proof of their pretended inspiration. Thirdly; this gift was peculiar to the primitive ages of christianity; bestowed for the purpose not only of enabling the first preachers of christianity to discipulise all nations; but of being produced, in attestation of their divine mission; and ceased at different periods, as circumstances, and the state of the gospel, varied. "Tongues were for a sign, not to them, who believe, but to them, who believe not."\*

With respect to our own particular liturgy, it has been admitted by the disinterested part of

\* 1 Cor. xiv. 22.



mankind, that nothing so much contributes to keep alive attention, and to excite mental devotion, as the shortness of our prayers, and the frequent responses of the people. What composition of its kind, framed for general use, and yet descending to so many particular cases, and accommodated to so many particular wants and calamities, deserves more commendation, than our admirable and excellent Litany? Amidst the whole body of literary productions, there is no form of prayer, more calculated to excite and preserve the attention, and devout feelings of the people.

But on this very argument some dissenters found an objection; and maintain, that the shortness of our prayers checks the impulse of the mind, and interrupts its devotion, immediately as it begins to flow. I may here ask, with what propriety can they object against the shortness of our prayers; and not object at the same time against the construction of our blessed Lord's prayer? Do they not know, or will they forget, that most of the prayers, used in our public service, are copied, in their form, after that divine model?

Other dissenters say, many of your prayers  
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are undoubtedly good; but many also are borrowed from the church of Rome; and there is such criminal coincidence in others, and in some of your rites and ceremonies, with that church, that we cannot conscientiously hold communion with you. But let me ask these people, whether it becomes us, as men, and as christians, after having purged their prayers from evil, to reject the part, which is good, merely because it is used by the church of Rome? Let us consider the consequences of admitting this principle. Were we to reject or destroy, whatever has been employed by the church of Rome to sinful purposes; when we assemble to worship God, we can neither pray, nor use any devout posture of body: because prayer, and such signs of devotion, have been made the medium of idolatrous worship. We cannot, consistently with this principle, use the greater part of our fonts, desks, pews, communion-tables, and church-yards; because such fonts, desks, pews, communion-tables, and church-yards, were consecrated in a superstitious age, after a superstitious manner; and were appropriated to divine use by members of the church of Rome. Had the leading men of the reformation

tion been of this opinion, why did they not level with the earth our churches and chapels, as well as the shrines and images, adored in them? The greater number of such churches and chapels were erected by papists; were dedicated to saints and angels, whose names they still bear; and have, as the dissenters admit, been defiled by idolatry. The admission of this principle in its full extent, as it must be done, if at all admitted, will, certainly, not only infringe upon christian liberty, but will destroy every external mark of public worship. Remember, what Saint Paul says; "to the pure, all things are pure."\* Permit me to observe also, that, at the reformation, no prayers were retained in our liturgy, but such, as possessed, in behalf of their adoption, the authoritative sanction of the primitive ages of christianity; such, as were used by the fathers of that period; and are still to be found in their writings. By adopting in our public service such prayers and ceremonies, as are good and edifying, founded on scripture, or transmitted, by undeniable tradition, from the apostolic age, we establish not, as right, what is evidently

\* Titus, i. 15.

wrong,



wrong, in the Roman church. The cross in baptism has been notoriously abused by papists. But it does not hence follow, that we ought totally to reject the use of it. The sign of the cross is, certainly, an indifferent ceremony: and baptism is, beyond a doubt, complete without it. Still our church is justified in retaining this sign, for this well-founded reason; because it was used in the first age of christianity. The import and meaning, which we ascribe to this sign, differ very widely, from what is ascribed to it in the Papal church. We continue the use of it in testimony, that the baptized “shall not hereafter be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ *crucified*.” Mr. Hooker, in his Ecclesiastical Polity,\* has drawn the just line of distinction between the import of this sign in our church, and in the church of Rome. “Between the cross,” says this able writer, “which superstition honoureth, as Christ, and that ceremony of the cross, which serveth only for a sign of remembrance, there is as plain and as great a difference, as between those brazen images, which Solomon made to bear up the

\* L. 5, p. 300, ed. 1705.

cistern of the temple, and that, which the Israelites in the wilderness did adore;" &c.

Another denomination of dissenters object, not only against the sign of the cross in baptism, but also against infant baptism itself. Though the rite of baptism was observed by the Jews, and was used in the synagogue, conjointly with circumcision, as the ceremony of initiating proselytes; yet baptism under the Evangelical dispensation was appointed to succeed circumcision under the Mosaic, in the same manner, as one positive institution succeeds another. Baptism is the same initiatory sacrament under the Gospel, as circumcision formerly was under the Law. It is a sign of covenant between God and man, and "a seal of the righteousness of faith." Under the old economy, parents were commanded to circumcise their infants, on the eighth day, as the initiatory ceremony into the covenant of grace. It is agreeable to analogy, therefore, to say, that into the gospel covenant, which is a similar covenant of grace, infants are equally capable of initiation, by the rite of baptism: because the object of baptism, namely, that of initiation, is hereby fully secured.

No

No passage of scripture can be produced, in which baptism is prohibited by our blessed Saviour. And the very command to his apostles, "Go and disciplinise all nations; baptizing them, &c,"\* undoubtedly, includes infants; and must be so understood by them; because infants were deemed capable of the benefits of baptism, even in the Jewish church. This consideration amounts, therefore, to a presumptive argument, that our Lord intended to bestow the sacrament of baptism upon infants, as well as upon adults. Could history, furnish us with the precise period of its introduction, since the establishment of christianity, or could any ancient church be named, which did not baptize infants, there would be some foundation, for suspecting its apostolical antiquity. But since we can trace back the observance of this rite to the first age of the gospel, and no evidence can be adduced against its universal practice, in every part of the christian world, many of whose churches were planted by different apostles, were unconnected, and maintained no correspondence with each other, it follows as an undeniable conse-

\* Matt. xxviii. 19.

quence,



quence, that infant baptism is derived from apostolical practice, and apostolical tradition.\*

In regard to sponsors also, the same observations and the same arguments are justly applicable. No one period of christianity can be ascertained, no one church can be mentioned, when, and in which, infants were commonly baptized without sponsors. Tertullian, who lived within one hundred years of the apostles, mentions the practice of sureties, as prevailing in his time. And the fact is, the use of sponsors is coeval with infant baptism; and infant baptism coeval with christianity; for "except a man be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."†

Another

\* History acquaints us, that the first body of men, who denied to infants baptism, were the Petrobrusians in the year of the Christian Æra 1150. They refused it upon this false ground; that infants, baptized, or not baptized, are incapable of the kingdom of heaven.

† John, iii. 5.

No considerable number of Antipædobaptists appeared in England, until the year of our Lord 1641. During the latter part of the reign of Charles the first, and the usurpation of Oliver Cromwell, being encouraged and protected by the power of the latter, they became progressively more numerous, and their principles more widely dispersed. A large body of Socinians also, about the  
same

Another objection some dissenters raise, in order to justify their separation from the established church; namely, our practice of kneeling in celebrating the sacrament of the Lord's supper. But this surely is an objection, the most insignificant and frivolous, which can possibly be urged. Did our blessed Saviour at any time *forbid* kneeling? Is *any* posture of body enjoined? Indeed, "do this," has been brought to prove, that *sitting* was commanded; because, the dissenters say, sitting is a table gesture, and our Lord sat, when he delivered these words. If this argument be just and conclusive, the same words may be brought to prove also, that we are commanded to celebrate this sacrament in an upper room, in a private house, on the evening of Thursday, after supper, to a family of only twelve, men, ministers, having their heads covered, agreeably to the custom of the country, and with unleavened bread. But the necessity of observing in this sacrament all these minute points, is denied by the very men, who

same period, and tinged by the same principles, who had been expelled from Poland, sought protection in the western parts of Europe, and brought with them the name, by which they were distinguished in Poland, that of *Anabaptists*.

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are advocates for fitting; though certainly the obligation to observe them, is equally forcible. Many of their celebrated writers, indeed, formerly admitted the legality of kneeling. Baxter himself says, on this subject; "I never heard any thing yet to prove it unlawful. If there be any thing, it must be either some word of God, or the nature of the ordinance, which is supposed to be contradicted. But first, there is no word of God for any gesture, nor against any. Christ's example can never be proved, to oblige us more in this, than in many circumstances, which are confessed not obligatory. And secondly, for the nature of the ordinance, it is mixt: and if it be lawful, to take a pardon from the king upon our knees, I know not what can make it unlawful, to take a sealed pardon from Christ, by his ambassador, upon our knees."\*

It is clear also from Saint Paul,† that the command, at the institution of the sacrament, was designed by our Lord to apply, not to any corporal gesture whatever; but only to the

\* Christian Dir. part 2, p. 111. quest. 3, sect. 40.

† 1 Cor. xi. 23, &c.



bread and wine, which signify his body and blood, and to those sacramental actions, mentioned by him, as a standing memorial of his passion.

It admits indeed of a doubt, what was the posture of our Saviour's body, at the institution of the sacrament. Because at the celebration of their passover, which the christian Eucharist was appointed to succeed,\* the Jews used a variety of gestures. However, it is generally allowed probable, that his posture was *inclining*.

But what, upon this occasion, was the precise posture of our Lord's body, signifies little. It is sufficient, that our actions, at the commemoration of his death, express veneration and reverence. And what posture is better calculated for this purpose, than kneeling? We are told by Saint Luke,† that our blessed Lord prayed, "kneeling," in the extremity of his passion. Is it, therefore, improper and unbecoming, when we commemorate his passion, to employ the posture of kneeling? The place, on which the consecrated elements stand in our

\* See Waterland on the Eucharist, p. 64.

† Chap. xxii. 41.

churches, is now called the *Communion Table*. But, for the long space of two hundred years after the death of Christ, this table was invariably distinguished by the name of *Altar*; and the Eucharist, by that of *Sacrifice* and *Oblation*. Is it, therefore, reasonable to suppose, that *sitting* was the posture used, in offering up this sacrifice on the altar? Is this a becoming posture, either of devotion, of reverence, of humility, or of gratitude? Grounded on various passages in the ecclesiastical writers, immediately succeeding the Apostolic age, an opinion has prevailed, and been received, as highly probable, that kneeling was the sacramental gesture, in the first age of christianity. Beyond a doubt, however, it remains, that the christians of that period celebrated the communion in an adoring posture. Which consideration alone is a sufficient justification of the present practice of the English church.

With respect to those dissenters, who deny the divinity of our Lord, (or, as one of their celebrated champions\* has thought proper to call them, the Unitarian Socinians,) and who

\* Dr. Priestley.

urge his worship, as a plea for their separation, as we differ in this first and great doctrine of christianity, it is not my intention, at *this* time, to controvert their opinions, and to prove the falsity of them. The execution of such a work would carry me beyond the limits, which I have prescribed to myself in this pamphlet. I deem it, however, not unseasonable, in this place, earnestly to exhort the established clergy, to make the fundamental doctrines of our religion more frequently the subject of their sermons. A great complaint is at present alleged, and alleged, I fear, not without some foundation, that the poor have not the *gospel* preached unto them; that our ministers are unedifying in *evangelical* truth. This cause has been assigned by many of the lower order of mankind, as their chief motive for following itinerant preachers; men, of the most ignorant and uneducated minds, who are capable of expressing only a few broken and incoherent sentences, on the subjects of grace, faith, repentance, salvation, &c.\* There  
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\* I have been well informed, that from the city of Salisbury alone, there issues forth, on the sabbath, no less a number, than between fifty and sixty dissenting preachers; some perhaps licenced;



may be perhaps some justness in this complaint. The present fashionable mode of preaching sermons, on the subject of morality only, excepting on particular festivals, I consider to be highly censurable. Morality, it is true, is intimately, is inseparably connected with christianity. I mean not, therefore, by this observation, to insinuate, that it should form no part of our discourses; or to deny, that the moral is the christian preacher. Were such sentiments expressed in unqualified terms, our Saviour's sermon on the Mount would bear ample testimony to their falseness. But I am of opinion, and have the satisfaction of annexing to this opinion also the venerable and much respected names of my Lord Bishop of Salisbury, and my Lord of Durham, that the *fundamental doctrines of christianity* are not sufficiently inculcated. The nature and condition of the gospel covenant, the redemption and regeneration of fallen man, the dignity and office of the Holy Ghost, and the indis-

many not licenced; self-instructed; self-ordained; employed, on common days, in the various capacities of *Tailors, Cabinet-makers, Shoemakers, Cobblers, Bakers, Blacksmiths, &c.* What instruction can such men furnish? "Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?"

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pensable necessity of good works, should be explained to our hearers in the plainest possible language. After undergoing an abridgment, and a few verbal corrections, which every clergyman is qualified to execute, and which his own judgment will point out, few sermons can be composed, better calculated for this purpose, than those of Bishop Wilson. Nor should the application of them to this use be deemed sufficient to create a blush in the face of any man. Such a strain of piety pervades the whole, expressed in the plainest and most feeling language, as cannot perhaps be equaled in any similar production.

It is objected also, that our mode of delivery is less edifying, because less vehement.—Oratory, it cannot be denied, is too little cultivated in the pulpit. It is true, that so many different qualities are necessary to constitute a perfect orator, that it should not excite our surprise, that they are so seldom found in the possession of one man. Still, however, the deficiency would in some measure be supplied, were Rhetoric appointed to form a branch of our public education; and honorary rewards assigned to the meritorious.—But, in answer to this objection,

I desire the dissenters will recollect, that their own unrivaled ministers are not all endowed with equal abilities. All are not eloquent and instructive. All possess not the same powers of persuasion. Is it surprising, therefore, that the established clergy should bear the same visible marks of inequality? Some possess the faculty of informing the judgment. Others, the power of awakening the affections, and rousing the passions. But be it recollected, that impressions on the mind, created by the conviction of the judgment, are deeper, more permanent, and instructive, than impressions, made by the vehemence of an impassioned preacher.

I intend not, however, to justify a cool indifferent mode of delivery. The established clergy should certainly endeavour to be earnest, serious, and impressive in their exhortations. What they feel strongly, they will express clearly; and deliver with becoming animation. To direct their feelings aright, therefore, should be the first and grand object of their attention. Every clergyman, rising to address an audience, should bear in mind, that he is God's vicergerent and representative; that he is commissioned to instruct the people around him, not in  
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a common or trivial doctrine, but in the way to eternal life; that the success or failure of his commission will depend upon his personal exertion; and that, for the due and proper discharge of this duty, he is personally responsible, and will hereafter be brought to account. These considerations, deeply impressed upon his mind, will render him, not only serious and instructive, but also animated, impressive, and eloquent.

Should our sermons be declared unprofitable, because they are read; the Bible and every other religious book, how valuable and excellent soever, incurs, by implication, the same severe censure. Besides, were our sermons well studied before delivery, and the truth and importance of the sentiments, contained in them, duly impressed upon the mind, I can see no assignable reason, why they may not be pronounced with a degree of animation, equal to extemporaneous discourses; whilst they doubtless are, beyond all shadow of comparison, infinitely superior in point of substance.

Want of edification, therefore, I consider, as only a superficial excuse for separation; whilst the real, but concealed, motive is either interest, or example, or ambition, or faction. Had these  
people,

people, who urge it, attended on the public service of the church, with a devout, an humble, and teachable temper of mind, such an inconsiderable objection would never have been raised, much less avowed. To acquire this desirable temper, to ascertain the true way of improving, both by sermons, and by the public worship, I beg leave to recommend to their perusal the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh sermon, in the first volume of the before-mentioned Bishop Wilson. They will then discover to their shame, that the want of edification is not imputable to any part of our public service; but is imputable only to their own prejudiced and indocile minds.

To those, who allege, as the sole motive of their withdrawing from our communion, a conscientious doubt of the legality of it, I answer, that our judgment of the rectitude, or criminality of any action should be decided by the standard of divine laws. No man can justly plead conscience for non-conformity, unless he is fully persuaded, that a compliance with the terms of our communion will subject him to the guilt of sin. Does not Saint Paul command us, to "obey them, who have the rule over

over us; and to be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake?" Every man therefore, is conscientiously bound to communicate with the established church, provided that church requires of its members, as the terms of communion, nothing, derogatory from the word of God. It is well known, that a dissenter of no inconsiderable merit, and who formerly distinguished himself, in an eminent degree, by his controversial writings,\* desirous of fulfilling his duty, and of creating no division, hesitated not, for many years, during the latter part of his life, to maintain communion with the church of Salisbury. As nothing, forbidden by divine authority, is required to conformity, every man, who withdraws from the ecclesiastical establishment of this country, upon the false pretence of deeming our communion illegal, can no illegality be proved, will not be considered free from the guilt of sin. Will a man's false persuasion justify the infringement of his duty? When Saint Paul believed himself bound to persecute the christians; let me ask, was his persecution sinful, or not? Sinful it assuredly

• Mr. Tombs,

was;



was; for the apostle calls himself, on this account, "the greatest of sinners." This consideration should be well weighed by those, who withdraw themselves, without a justifiable reason, from the established church. We all worship the same God; believe in the same Saviour; have the same baptism; the same faith; the same hope; the same common interest. Most of us differ only in the ritual part of our worship. If the ceremonies, employed by us, can be proved antisciptural; if kneeling be forbidden at the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and sitting enjoined; if preconceived forms of prayer be contrary to the word of God, and to apostolical practice, and extemporaneous prayer be found conformable with it; then, indeed, there would be some solid reasons for non-conformity; and our controversy would be brought to immediate issue. But since the desired proof cannot be produced, in the whole field of divine revelation, and since our ceremonies are enjoined by our constituted magistrates, the legality and indispensability of them must be admitted; because, "where there is no law, there is no transgression;"\* and it is our duty to "submit to our

\* Rom. iv. 15.

governors in all lawful things." To be so extremely scrupulous and particular, respecting the external part of christianity, and to neglect its essential duties, the duties of a righteous and holy life, of a peaceable spirit and conversation, as a numerous body of dissenters confessedly do, is sufficient to excite the pious indignation of every serious and well-disposed mind. They too much resemble their hypocritical predecessors in our Saviour's time, those scribes and pharisees, who "strained at a knat and swallowed a camel." Let me inform them, that the "kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost."\* Those people, therefore, who through a deficiency in their education, are incapable of forming a decisive and correct judgment on such important subjects of religion, but important only in their consequences, would act a safe and wise part, implicitly to rely on their ministers, who are legally established to instruct them, rather than to "break the bond of peace" and brotherly love; for nothing but sinful terms of

\* Rom. xiv. 17.

conformity, I have proved, can justify a separation.

Those unfortunate men, who halt between two opinions, who alternately attend the public service of the establishment, and the public service of dissenting meetings, I desire to consider, that, by the sacrament of baptism, we immediately become members of the visible church of Christ. But certainly there can exist no visible church, without visible communion. And, therefore, every member is bound to maintain visible communion, in order to preserve the visibility of the church, and his rights of membership. If occasional communion be legal, which is admitted, constant communion is our indispensable duty. For every man, who is, by baptism, admitted a member of the christian church, is admitted a member of the *whole* christian church; and is therefore obliged, by the nature of his admission, constantly to perform acts of communion with that part of the church, in which he may constantly, or occasionally, reside. There cannot, without incurring the charge of scism, exist two distinct churches, in the same place. It is not legal, therefore, to communicate in the same place,

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occasionally with the established church, occasionally with a dissenting congregation; because such conduct is positively repugnant to the principles of church communion. The right of holding communion with the church, is grounded on our baptismal admission. And to be members of two religious societies of opposite principles, amounts to as much personal inconsistency, as the principles of these two societies are inconsistent with each other. Whoever communicates occasionally with both churches, the real and the pretended church, incurs the guilt of schism. And if the crime of schism will condemn us, as Saint Paul asserts,\* equally with the crimes of idolatry and murder, it follows, it is both criminal and dangerous to communicate with schismatics, and, consequently, with all dissenters.

Since it appears, therefore, that the rule of conscience will oblige every man to associate constantly with the established church, with which he admits it lawful to associate occasionally, it is the indispensable duty of every Englishman to adhere to that church. The unity

\* Gall. v. 19, 20.

of the church consists, not only in professing the same faith, but in joining constantly in the same divine worship. Did she, indeed, require us to profess any false doctrine, or to commit any action, plainly repugnant to the divine law, it would become us, as sincere and well-disposed christians, to withdraw from her service. But as the contrary is confessedly the fact, we are bound, by the same rule of conscience, to observe constant communion with her; for as I have proved, sinful conditions only will exempt dissenters from the punishment of schism.

Another argument, which may be adduced in favour of constant communion, ought not, I conceive, to be passed over, unnoticed and unapplied. I maintain then, syllogistically, that if conformity be, at one time, legal, it is, under similar circumstances, always legal. And that it is sometimes legal, is proved by the conduct of the dissenters themselves, who do occasionally communicate. The legality, therefore, is admitted. If the legality be admitted, and it be admitted also, that there exists, but *one* catholic church, of which the church of England forms a part, and that every deviation, from the established law of that church, as I  
have

have already proved, amounts to schism; it follows, that this body of dissenters stand, individually *self-condemned*.

The Presbyterians object also to the establishment of Episcopal authority. But we challenge them to produce a single instance, within the space of nearly fifteen hundred years, or to the time of Calvin, that any established church existed without the order of bishops. Even our most violent adversaries have been forced to admit, that this office obtained in the church within a few years of the apostolic age. They admit also, that there were originally in the christian church, two distinct orders of ministers, inferior to the apostles; presbyters, or elders, or priests, and deacons. The Greek word, *ἐπίσκοποι*, whenever it occurs, both in the acts of the apostles, and in the epistles, relates solely to the former order, and not to the order of bishops; and is therefore usually rendered, in the Syriac version of the New Testament, by the Latin word, *presbyter*. But the order of bishops succeeded that of apostles. They were constituted by them; were anciently distinguished by the same appellation; and were equipollent in authority. Such were not only the apostles



apostles themselves, but also Timothy, and Titus, and Epaphroditus, and those, whom Saint Paul denominates,\* ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν, translated, messengers, (or apostles,) of the church; and who only were invested with the power of ordination. These facts, being admitted and proved, sufficiently justify the continued establishment of the same order, in the English church; and condemn the futility of such objections.

Our blessed Lord established, but one universal, or catholic church, which consists of "one body, and one spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all."† By separating from the national church upon the ground of such frivolous and insignificant objections, the dissenters not only destroy the unity of the church, but also counteract the intentions and prayers of our Saviour himself. One of his last petitions, respecting the members of his church, was conveyed to heaven in these words: "that they all may be one, as thou, father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the world may be-

\* 2 Cor. viii. 23.

† Ephes. iv. 4, 5, 6.

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lieve, that thou hast sent me.”\* Saint Paul most earnestly exhorts all christians to “keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.”† No sin is denounced in scripture, more frequently, or with more severe punishment, than that of schism, separation, or division. When the apostle enumerates the crimes, “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, &c. &c.” the word, “*αἵρεσις*,” which we render, “heresies,” is intended to signify, factions, sects, or divisions; “which they, who create, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”‡ That this is the just import of the word, we need to refer only to 1 Cor. xi. 18, 19. In the former of these verses, the word, translated, “divisions,” or schisms, and, in the latter, the word translated, “heresies,” are employed, by the apostle, in a synonymous sense; *ἡ διχομαχία*,—*αἵρεσις*. “If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort in love, if any fellowship in the spirit, if any bowels and mercies; fulfil you my joy, that you be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”§ “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, mark them, who cause di-

\* John, xvii. 21.

† Ephes. iv. 3.

‡ Gal. v. 19, 20, 21.

§ Phil. ii. 1, 2.

visions and offences; and avoid them: for, by good words and fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of the simple."\*

Having refuted the principal objections, usually advanced by the dissenters against conformity with the worship of our national church, I cannot forbear pointing out to the observation of my countrymen the line of conduct, now pursuing by members of that body, in employing such uncommon exertion to proselyte the inferior members of society. The very dregs of the people they are anxious and indefatigable to convert: men, possessed of no property, and of understandings, weak and unprincipled; without opinion, and without thought; pliant and able instruments, it must be admitted, under the direction of an ambitious and designing faction. Such conduct, adopted under existing circumstances, and compared with their conduct in former periods of the English history, insinuates into my mind the opinion, that their real object is not religious, but political; and that this object leads them to alienate the attachment of the people to the established church, as the ground-

\* Rom. xvi. 17, 18.



work and foundation of some secret designs in the field of politics. It has ever been the leading principle of all revolutionists to overthrow the church, as the first step to a political revolution. All those itinerant preachers, who infest the villages of this country, and more so, in no part of the country, than in the neighbourhood of Salisbury, declaim, in violent language, on the subject of pecuniary retribution; and profess themselves disinterested in their professional employment. These men possess the artifice of deceiving the ignorant mind, which is unacquainted with the nature of their connections, and their designs. It is an act of justice and propriety, therefore, to explain to those deluded people, that the very men who have so often endeavoured to stigmatise the national clergy by the appellation of *birelings*, do actually at this moment, receive a salary from an association of members, formed for that purpose; whose political principles may be found perhaps, upon examination, not the most friendly to our present form of government. Their sole object in view, I cannot prevail on myself to believe, is that of serving Christ. The number they have already converted, and the indefatiga-

ble exertions still making to increase this number, are sufficient, in my opinion, to justify serious and earnest endeavours, on the part of the established clergy, and of every sound patriot, to undeceive the deluded multitude, on religious doctrines, and to strip from their political designs the hypocritical veil, with which it has ever been, invariably, their adopted practice to conceal them. We cannot, at this moment, be too circumspect, too vigilant, or too suspicious of all their movements, both religious and political. Every man, at all conversant with English history, must know, what political changes the dissenters have effected in former times; must know the distress, the calamities, and misery, inflicted, at different periods, upon the inhabitants of this country, by their restless and disloyal exertions. Were I called upon to cite particular instances of such calamities, such changes, and effective marks of their disloyalty, I would refer my reader to the reign of Charles the First, as a period, the most apposite at the present moment. Who were the principal and active promoters of the rebellion, and all the distressful circumstances, and tragical events, which marked the reign of that unhappy prince:

prince: in which brother daily contended with brother, and the arm of the son was uplifted against the parent of his existence? Who subverted, in that contest, the first principles of the constitution, and brought the unfortunate Charles to the block? Who, after these successful attempts, not only seated Cromwell upon his vacated throne, under the fictitious denomination of Protector; but also established, upon an immovable base, his usurped authority? To all these questions the same general answer may be given; the dissenters. Though these men are distinguished by an endless variety of denominations, and each denomination professes religious principles, inconsistent with another, yet the whole collective body have, at all times, uniformly displayed the same hostility to regal government. An English historian, of no inconsiderable merit, speaking on the political sentiments and conduct of different branches of them, during the above reign, says; " Since the times of Elizabeth, a new religious sect had been gaining ground in England; which, from the supposed purity of their manners, were called, *Puritans*. Of all other sects, this was the most dangerous to monarchy; and the tenets of



it more calculated to support that imagined equality, which obtains in a state of nature."\* And, in another place, under the same reign, the historian proceeds; "From the moment the Puritans began to be apparently united, and ranked under one denomination of *Presbyterians*, they began again to divide into fresh parties, each professing different views and interests. One part of the house was composed of *Presbyterians*, strictly so called. The other, though a minority, of *Independents*; a new sect, which had lately been introduced, and gained ground surprisingly. The difference between these two sects would be hardly worth mentioning, did not their religious opinions influence their political conduct. The church of England had appointed Bishops of clerical ordination, and a book of Common Prayer. The *Presbyterians* exclaimed against both. They were for having the church governed by clergymen, elected by the people; and prayers made without premeditation. The *Independents* went still farther. They excluded all the clergy. They maintained, that every man might pray in public; exhort

\* Goldsmith's History of England, Charles the First.

his audience; and explain the Scriptures. Their political system kept place with their religious. Not contented with reducing the king to a first magistrate, which was the aim of the Presbyterians; this sect aspired to the *abolition*, not only of all *monarchy*, but of all *subordination*. They maintained, and they maintained right, that all men were born equal. But they alleged also, that no accidental, or artificial institutions could destroy this equality; and there they were deceived." And again he says; "Among the *Independents*, who, in general, were for having no ecclesiastical subordination, a set of men grew up, called *Levellers*; who disallowed all subordination whatsoever. They declared, that all men were equal; that *all degrees and ranks should be levelled, and an exact partition of property established in the nation.*" They did not consider, that "the wise and industrious must, in every country, prevail over the weak and idle: and the bad success of the independent scheme soon after shewed, how ill adapted such speculative ideas were to human infirmity."

From this short extract we may perceive a few of the ecclesiastical and political opinions, entertained by different branches of the dissenters,

senters, who prevailed in the reign of the unfortunate Charles, with the sentiments upon this subject of an impartial historian. The descendants of these men exist in the present day; and exist in such increasing numbers, as justly to create an alarm for the welfare of our present constitution. For, whatever difference of opinion may arise amongst them, on the subject of religion, they are united, in the same inveterate hatred, against regal, as well as episcopal government. This remains, and ever will remain, a permanent and fundamental principle. The great father and founder of presbytery, from whose religious opinions, however, the modern dissenters have considerably degenerated, not only avowed, but published at Geneva political positions, manifestly adverse to monarchy.\* And should the moment unfortunately arrive, when the dissenters might deem themselves sufficiently numerous and powerful to dread no formidable opposition by the friends of regal government, it will prove our lot to lament, without the power of retrieving, our want of precaution, in not checking, at an earlier period, their luxu-

\* See Calvin's Institutions.



riant growth. By weakening the sentiments of attachment and veneration, which the people feel towards their present ecclesiastical establishment, they have adopted the most effectual mode of finally subverting our civil constitution. For there exist such close sympathy and connection between the two establishments, that no considerable change can be effected in one, without destroying, in a proportionate degree, the security of the other. Episcopal jurisdiction has been declared not only "favourable to monarchy," but "one of the strongest bulwarks of the royal power." \* Is it at all surprising, therefore, that the enemies of monarchy should attack episcopacy, as the foundation of some future attacks upon monarchy itself? Is it at all surprising, that the enemies of our present happy constitution should exert such uncommon industry, to withdraw from the communion of the church her inferior members; upon whose uneducated minds sentiments of sedition and treachery may be inculcated, with probability of success? Is it at all surprising, that the friends to our establishments should feel and express an

\* Goldsmith's History of England, Charles the First.

alarm for their welfare, when, in the course of the last year, the number of dissenting places of worship, licensed for the purpose of preaching their religious, and perhaps political, tenets, under the mask of serving God, and instructing the ignorant, increased, in the diocese of Salisbury alone, from *seven*, or *eight*, upon an average of eighteen years, to *forty*; and that no less a number, than *fifty* men, of the lowest order, leave that city, every sabbath, for the express purpose of dispersing and inculcating, amidst the neighbouring villages, the same tenets? The fact indeed appears, to a common observer, incredible; and had we not the highest authority for affirming it, we might perhaps reasonably suspect its truth. To our venerable and learned diocesan a very considerable share of praise and gratitude is undoubtedly due, by every true friend to his country; not only for the attention, displayed, upon this occasion, to the welfare of the church; but for his earnest endeavours, exerted to check the progress of their conversion, under a political view also; which will, I doubt not, call forth the vengeance of the party. The success of their late attempts, indeed, has already afforded them a subject of  
boast

boast and encouragement; and they have intreated, in the most earnest manner, the members of the association, by whose pecuniary subscription their ministers receive their annual support, and who are consequently considered, as the pillars of the sect, "to do to the utmost of their ability, in support of their cause."\*

Whilst so much activity and zeal are displayed against the established church, by an endless variety of sects, whose religious principles are unintelligible to each other, and, probably, not strictly intelligible to themselves, but whose political principles are permanent, uniform, and universally understood, will the national clergy and the friends to monarchy stand, uninterested spectators of the threatened changes? Will they not endeavour, each in his different sphere of action, to strip the veil from the face of hypocrisy, and expose their disguised plans? Will they not endeavour, by private admonition and public good conduct, not only to stop the progress of their conversion, but to reclaim the deluded, and to restore to the church her poor, decayed, and apostate members? The chief ob-

\* See the Circular Letter, prepared and published April last, by Mr. John Adams, of Salisbury, p. 2, 5.



jections, alleged against conformity, I have already proved to be futile and frivolous; and though many of their members may, doubtless, be actuated by sincere and good motives, which charity will induce me to admit, yet I hesitate not to declare my decided opinion, that the motives for separation of, by far, the greater number are, neither religious, nor patriotic. It is our duty, therefore, and the duty of every sincere friend to the constitution of his country, to be watchful and suspicious of all their proceedings. Religion is the professed object of their attention: but the secret object we are left to discover, by connecting, with their late and present conduct, the line of conduct, pursued by their ancestors, in former reigns; and the consequences of that conduct. The deplorable calamities and tragical events, which afflicted and disgraced the English nation in the reign of Charles the First, we are informed by historians, are imputable to the dissenters. The enthusiastic Cromwell, I have observed, they placed on the fallen throne; and though he granted them his protection, condescended publicly to preach and pray, and declared, that his prayers were dictated by an extraordinary impulse of the spirit, yet he was actuated,

actuated, as to these instances of his conduct, by principles, not of religion, but of policy. He considered them, as the instruments of his advancement; and that his usurped authority would be no longer secure, than whilst that favour and protection continued. He was the common friend; therefore, of dissenters of all persuasions; and endeavoured to increase their number, and consequently to confirm his own power, by promoting various branches of the same sect.

But were we to admit, that the motives of dissenters were exclusively religious, and not political, schism is a dangerous and enormous crime; a crime, denounced in scripture with no common punishment. By withdrawing from the established church without a just cause, and no cause can be called just, which has not, for its base, a violation of the divine law, they withdraw all communion with Christ, and forfeit all the promised blessings of the gospel covenant. For we are no longer parties in this covenant, than whilst we are members of the holy catholic church; and no man can be a member of this church, who observes not constant communion with her. “Wherefore  
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my brethren, I again beseech you," in the language of Saint Paul, "to mark them, who cause divisions and offences; and avoid them. For, by good words and fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of the simple."\*

\* Rom. xvi. 17, 18.

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